

Be a *Shaliach*

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

[Thomas Michael Smith](#)

CPC 3/26/00

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This morning I am going to speak to you for a relatively short time. We are trying to make space for taking the demographic survey this morning. The survey is an important component of our effort to bring an associate pastor to CPC. And the survey is also an act of our worship because, in reality, our entire lives are a continuing act of worship, in which we bring forth our energy, intelligence, imagination, and love, toward each other, and toward the hurting world into which God has placed us.

The survey is a step in carrying forth a vision that has emerged at CPC, a conception of life together as the body of Christ that empowers each person and gives each one a ministry area in which to demonstrate the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit. As a church, we have been named as a body of Christ. *Our goal is to inhabit this name, to be in reality what Jesus asks us to be.*

The shaliach was the 'no name' person who carried forward the stipulations of the suzerainty treaties with the vassal king on behalf of the 'great king,' the suzerain. In himself, the shaliach had no meaning. He often did not even have a name. His meaning was discovered in terms of the one who sent him on missions. His authority was not in himself, but in the one who sent him. The shaliach, though a slave or an ambassador, would be received by a vassal king in the same way the vassal king would have received his lord (the one who had conquered him in battle) if the lord had come in person.

If honor was due to the great king in the eyes of the vassal king, then honor would be given to the shaliach. If the vassal king wished to rebel against the great king, then the shaliach, the king's messenger, would be dishonored. Perhaps he would be beaten and tortured, or his head would be cut off. His head might be put on a plate and sent back to the great king along with the retinue of servants who had come with the shaliach. If the vassal wished to show honor to the great king, then the shaliach would be given beautiful clothes and rings, a banquet, and coins for his personal use.

The well-being of the shaliach depended on the vassal's view of the great king to whom he was to bow within the suzerainty. The shaliach's safety also would depend on the vassal's view of the treaty. All would depend on whether the vassal would bow to the great king and the stipulations of the great king.

And so it is for those who serve as ambassadors of Christ. We may be well-received or we may be humiliated or killed. *It really doesn't matter. We serve God.* Our service is not dependent on the acceptance by those to whom we are sent.

Let me tell you a story about a shaliach. A pastor went to the Toronto General Hospital to visit a Polish woman, named Helen, with three small children, who was dying of intestinal cancer. He asked her, "Helen, would you like me to read a passage of scripture to you and have a prayer with you?"

"No thanks," she said, "I have my own religious faith."

So the pastor turned to leave, but as he did so the woman in the next bed said, "Come here." The pastor didn't remember her name, and she might not have given it. But when he came to her side, she said to him, "Young man, I am just so glad that you have come here and that you want to serve the Lord and spread the Gospel of Jesus. I want you to know that I am a member of a Pentecostal church and that I love the Lord Jesus as my Savior, and I want to praise Him every day of my life. I want to pray for you."

The pastor said, "Could I pray for you?"

The woman replied, "No, you are not going to pray for me today. I am going to pray for you. Get down on your knees beside the bed there, bring your head over here so I can lay my hand on your head."

The pastor did as she asked, and then the woman prayed for him, and he still remembers some of the words she said that day. He went away and came back two or three weeks later, looking for Helen. He didn't recognize the thin emaciated woman on the bed, but yes, it was she. He began to speak to her, but Helen, the Polish woman with the three children and the terminal intestinal cancer, interrupted him and said, "I want you to read the Bible to me and to pray for me. Pray for my safe journey to heaven."

The pastor said, "You do?"

Helen said, "Yes, there has been a great change in my life since you came to see me. It had nothing to do with you. It was the lady who used to be in the bed next to me. You remember the lady who asked you to get on your knees and to pray? I was quite touched by that. That lady was the most selfless person I ever knew. She was always concerned about me and my children and my husband. But what really impressed me was that she was in great pain. She would often sit up in bed and scream with pain. Then she would say, 'Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Praise Jesus.'"

"I have come to believe. If that woman, dying in the midst of severe pain, could still praise God, there must be something about her religion. So I asked her about it, and she led me to Christ. I am going to heaven today or someday soon."

That Pentecostal woman was a shaliach, a no-name person, an ambassador for Jesus who thought not about herself, but only of others and what her Master wanted her to do. *This is who we are.* This is why we pray for vision, as a church, as a body of Christ. This is why we set our sights on an associate pastor, and why we spend precious worship time today to work together on a survey. We want to see Jesus, to follow Jesus, to spend every penny we have, on any way we can, to glorify Jesus Christ. We would be shaliachs, ambassadors for Christ. And it doesn't matter whether or not we are well received because, after all, *we serve God.*

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